

Safety is No Accident

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Motor vehicle safety campaign set for May

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Crosswalk near miss brings back haunting memories

By Rindy Carmichael

Even the most attentive and conscientious driver may suffer a brief moment of distraction, but it only takes a moment to hit—or avoid hitting—a pedestrian, as George Jarrell recently learned.

Jarrell, the shuttle orbiter project Safety Reliability and Quality Assurance manager, was returning from lunch on March 21, driving below the posted 25 mph speed limit. Keeping attuned to red lights, signs and potential pedestrians, he made his way back to Bldg. 45.

“I was particularly cautious when I came to the crosswalk between Bldgs. 17 and 15,” he said. “I have personally seen a lot of near misses

due to pedestrians who appear to be walking along the sidewalk, only to make what seems like an immediate left into the crosswalk that many drivers aren’t prepared for. I am always attentive while driving; I believe that is my job at the time. However, that day, something happened to me I can’t explain.”

In the less than 100 yards it took to get to the next crosswalk, Jarrell said, his mind wandered to a problem his team had just solved on STS-76, allowing for its safe launch. In that split second, he missed seeing a woman already in the crosswalk. If it had not been for her quick reaction, he is convinced he would have hit her.

“Something in my mind clicked and I saw her, but by the time I put on my brakes it was too late—I was past the crosswalk. Fortunately, she had seen I wasn’t going to stop in time and

jumped back out of the way,” he continued. “I remembered reading an article in the safety page that instructed the driver and pedestrian to make eye contact, so I did. I know she was frightened.”

Jarrell explained why he never thought this would happen to him. “Early in my career, I had a very emotional experience related to a crosswalk that still haunts me. I worked for Boeing and our chief engineer for the test center was an older gentleman, very brilliant, but centrally focused. He would get his mind on one thought and not be aware of anything else. One particular afternoon I was on top of Bldg. 420 performing some quality work when I looked into the street and noticed a meat packing truck barreling down the road around 50 mph. I saw the engineer walk right in front of the truck with the truck blowing his horn. He was killed on impact, after being

thrown about 60 feet into the air. I was one of the first people to reach him. I’ll never forget what I witnessed.”

“What happened today scared me. It scared me because if it can happen to me, it can happen to anyone,” Jarrell said. “There was no distraction, no reason at all, not to have seen that pedestrian. I hope by sharing my story, I may help save someone from really getting hurt.”

Jarrell said his experience reminded him that pedestrian safety is a two-way street. Both drivers and pedestrians must be vigilant when they are in or near a crosswalk.

“We feel, as a pedestrian, we are protected on site—but that is not always the case,” Jarrell concluded. “Drivers are not always going to see a sign or a person, no matter how much attention they think they pay. I’m living proof.”

Smokers urged to take care

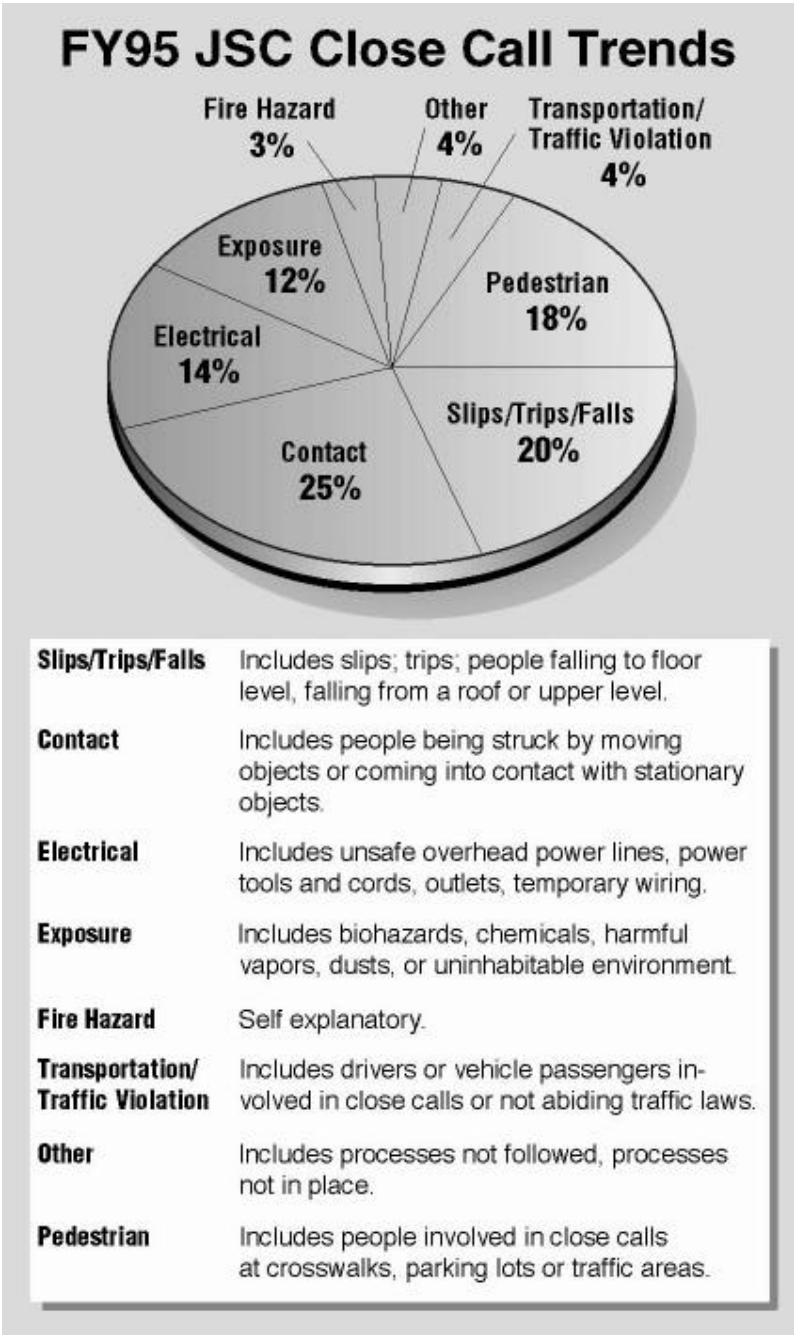
Smoldering stubs blamed for rash of outdoor fires

A recent upsurge of fires on site has resulted from the improper disposal of smoking materials such as cigars, cigarettes, and matches by employees and visitors, according to JSC fire prevention officials.

Incorrect disposal of a cigarette was suspected as the cause of a Jan. 9 fire that erupted in a trash can outside Bldg. 48. On March 26, outside Bldg. 9A, an unextinguished cigarette butt was the cause of another fire in some landscaping mulch. A discarded match caused the April 5 fire in the street gutter outside the Second St. gate. An accumulation of cigarette butts in that area indicated individuals are carelessly discarding them from vehicles before entering the gate.

“Smokers should remember the criticality of the site,” said Fire Protection Maintenance and Operations Lead John Dee. “Operations could be jeopardized if an initial fire spread to one of our structures. It is important to make sure all cigarette butts and matches are completely extinguished before discarding to prevent serious mishap and, more importantly, to prevent personal injury.”

For information regarding new or extra smoking receptacles for their building contact Cindy Ratliff, x33208.



Four actions aid crosswalk safety

Four immediate actions could help solve JSC’s rising crosswalk incident problem, according to a panel of JSC workers experienced in crosswalk hazards that studied the problem for six months.

Close Call Reports of pedestrian and contact categories are much higher than the national average and have spawned investigation and corrective actions.

Chairman Dick Snyder of the Mission Operations Directorate said the committee’s recommendations include:

- ◆ Installing a pedestrian-activated traffic light and extending the median on the corner of Avenue B and Fifth St.;
- ◆ Creating a Pedestrian Close Call Report;
- ◆ Creating Pedestrian Zones, similar to School Zones, on Second St. between Bldgs. 17 and 47, and on Fifth St. near Bldgs. 4, 5, 35 and T-585; and
- ◆ Deleting parking spots and adding signs or lights in the Beta Link area, Avenue D at Bldg. 2 area and Avenue B in the Bldg. 300-400 areas.

Safety, Reliability and Quality Assurance Director Charlie Harlan said he expects all of the recommendations to be adopted by JSC management.

Many more changes are envisioned across the center, he said. It is important for employees to be alert so that the changes can be recognized and the appropriate action taken. Efforts to improve the attentiveness of every individual who crosses a JSC street, also will be stepped up.

“The modification messages may sound much like when your mother told

you to look both ways before crossing the street, but we need to remember to take responsibility for our own safety,” Snyder said. “The center can help us by implementing structural changes—but it is ultimately up to each one of us change our own attitudes.”

JSC workers who participated in the study included John Byard, Johnson Controls World Services; Gary Jackson, Health, Safety, and Environmental Compliance Office; Carl Poindexter, Mason and Hanger; L.D. Stevenson, Barrios, Nathan Vassberg, and Margie Wood, Krug.

“I recruited individuals for this team who had a vested interest to become part of the ‘solution’,” Snyder said. “Individuals who had submitted close call reports were not only allowed, but were encouraged to actively participate.”

The team tried to function as an advocate for JSC workers, both as pedestrians and drivers, and not be influenced by previous studies and evaluations.

Pedestrian Close Call reports are above the national average, but other reports of close calls at JSC are closer to the national average.

Slips/trips/falls were about average, and electrical close calls are slightly higher than average. The Close Call reporting system has become a leading indicator of hazardous conditions and undesirable trends at JSC. For fiscal year 1996, 206 reports have been submitted. This record response averages more than 41 reports a month, and is spurring increased emphasis to investigate trends above the national average.

Safety Home Page now available

Page features library of safety information

The JSC Safety Home Page is up and running with a variety of easy-to-use information.

The page is on the World Wide Web segment of the Internet at the address <http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/jsc/safety/>

“The Home Page will eventually become a one-stop resource for safety information at JSC,” said Larry Neu, chairman of the Communications and Employee Ownership subcommittee of the Executive Safety Committee. “We wanted to get something on line as soon as possible and let the users tell

us what should be implemented next. We will prioritize these inputs and, as time and staffing permit, will add as we go along.”

The Safety Home Page features an extensive library of safety information resources, including Safety Alerts, previous Space News Roundup Safety Pages, the JSC Safety Manual, and a listing of various subject matter experts. A list of future attractions also has been included.

A prominent Safety Home Page addition is a flash alert displaying

JSC’s on-site emergency phone number, x33333. Links to other safety reference locations include the home pages of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.

Future plans for the Safety Home Page call for inclusion of safety-related event schedules. Other additions will include listings of hot-line responses and Close Calls. To request additional features, contact Mark Klebig at x33546.

